

JEREMIAH 8:18-9:1-18 REFLECTION SEPTEMBER 21ST 2025

‘VOICES OF LAMENT’

Our journey with Jeremiah continues today with his persistent lamenting about the suffering and sorrow experienced by the Israelites. Jeremiah is often referred to as the Weeping Prophet. Today, his conversation concerns a great sense of grief not only for the people of Israel, but also for the brokenness that surrounds us all. ‘Listen to the weeping of my people all across the land,’ he pleads, inviting us into a space of contemplation, compassion and empathy. As we reflect on Jeremiah’s words today it’s a time to pause and take seriously the anguish that echoes through the ages.

If we were to truly stop and listen to the weeping of the people today, we would encounter a chorus of voices, each expressing their unique pains of grief and longing. The first group we might hear weeping is those affected by loss – individual mourning the death of someone they loved dearly and will deeply miss in every way possible. There are also people who are grieving the loss of a relationship or have had their hopes and dreams shattered. Every tear shed is part of a lost story, a life intertwined with others, now forever altered. This weeping resonates deeply within us; it stems from our shared humanity, only drawing attention to the fragility of life.

We also hear the weeping of the marginalised and oppressed – those whose voices are often muted by systems, rules and regulations by either government or organisations. In many communities, poverty, violence, and discrimination inflict deep wounds that are very difficult to heal. Here, we find countless stories of struggle, despair, and an earnest plea for justice. Their weeping is a call to acknowledge their very existence in the realities of social engineering, their despair in finding places where they are comfortable and fit in, and an earnest plea for justice. Unless we intentionally make ourselves aware, their weeping goes unnoticed. As Christ’s followers this should stir us to a deeper awareness of our role speaking out or assisting those in need.

We can also hear the weeping of the broken-hearted families affected by conflict be it domestic or political. The pain of separation -whether from a parent in prison, children displaced by war, or families torn apart by the breakdown in relationships, perhaps families are experiencing separation of economic hardships due to the higher than expected cost of living crises- each of these resonates greatly with Christ, who is joyful when we work together as a united and disciplined people of God working to bring about renewal. In these

stories, we encounter our discomfort and reality of a world marred by violence, urging us to examine our own complicity in cycles of conflict and regret. At the present time we may also find ourselves listening to the cries of creation itself, as it suffers under the weight of human activity. The environmental changes we're facing is a sobering reality that evokes a different kind of weeping. – the lament of the land – droughts and floods, animals – some come closer to extinction, and ecosystems crying out for proper management so it can have a part to play in the future. The devastation wrought by the changes to the weather systems and excessive air pollution echoes Jeremiah's prophetic message of our responsibility to care for the earth.

So, whose voices do we hear weeping:

Firstly, the bereaved: families and individuals left behind after a tragedy, struggling to reconcile joy and sorrow. People who are living through broken relationships are also situations where you find a great deal of grief and loss.

Secondly, the oppressed: Minorities fighting for recognition and rights, land rights, enduring systemic racism, sexism, and inequality, yearning for a world that values who they are and where they're from.

Thirdly, children in crisis: we see images of children in Ukraine, and Gaza all young souls fleeing violence, hunger, and instability, those who aren't recognised as citizens or bearers of rights, whose childhoods have been stolen from them.

Fourthly, caregivers and people who work on the frontline. We hear their weeping through the sighs of exhaustion, compassion and empathy as they carefully tend to the needs of others in their state of crisis and emergency.

Finally, through nature and creation: communities living through the natural disasters of floods, droughts, and fires as the weather continues to change. Each one leaves behind the cries of the homeless animals, the suffering water systems, and the loss of life not to mention the human distress who witness the aftermath.

But what can we do in response?

There's a lot for us to weep about isn't it! As we have listened to these five separate groups who are all in distress about the circumstances they find themselves in, is an invitation to a mutual response calling out for a response to

be formed from a base of understanding, compassion, and a commitment to working towards healing.

We start with an approach of empathy and compassion: which have to be genuine and authentic. By establishing connections with those who are living with their suffering, we open ourselves to their experiences. Simply being present, listening without judgment, and creating spaces for people to express their feelings of grief and pain. Jesus modeled this in His ministry, tenderly engaging with those on the margins, healing the sick and lame, offering hope to those who thought there was no hope for them.

As followers of Christ, we have an opportunity to be a voice for those who have been silenced. We can support policies that help lift people up where second chances have the capacity to change lives and communities. We can encourage others or ourselves to begin conversations that speak about equality or perhaps volunteer some free time in our congregation's activities, or find ways which alleviate suffering. When we do this, we align our actions with God's call to be people of love, encouragement and grace.

Increasingly we have come to realise just how important it is to create safe spaces for conversations. This kind of space can become a refuge nurturing an environment where people can voice their pain either singular or multiples so they can find long awaiting peace. This is one of the aspirations of our Market @The Meeting Place. One of the ways we can exercise our discipleship and enduring faith.

On the minds of so many people who are living with anxiety is the state of God's creation. Our response to how we care for God's loving gift of the world are the steps we take to care for it. This involves living sustainably, leaving a small footprint in the spaces we use. As stewards of the God's creation, we are each called to honour the beauty of the earth and assure its future.

One of the things that I love about the Psalms is that it always has wisdom that we can rest assured by Psalm 19:1 says, 'The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands'. This verse alone emphasises how the beauty of the earth, from the starry skies to breathtaking landscapes, serves as a testament to the divine artistry and majesty of our loving Creator God. There are more such as Psalm 104:24-25 and Genesis 2:15 and Revelation 4:11.

Our response to all Jeremiah's weeping is to pray, pray and keep praying. In our prayers we will find the healing we are seeking. Prayer will always be a vital part of our spiritual commitment. Through out prayers Christ will feel our sorrow for

our ourselves and our communities. In humility we come to God seeking help in our healing, for strength of spirit as we come closer to God. Through a disciplined prayer and study life we hear and respond to the Spirit's guidance. Reading the scriptures regularly we become familiar with laments, such as Jeremiah's who offers us a framework for expressing our heartbreak as we continually seek the Holy Spirit's comfort, compassion and love.

Listening to the weeping of people compels us into a deeper understanding of our shared experiences pushing us to seek out the stories often drowned out by the daily noise. In responding to these cries with empathy, and action, we are being the body of Christ in action involving healing and justice. Jeremiah's call echoes throughout time inviting us not only to hear but also to take action to confront the sorrows of this world with the transformative love of Christ and the hope of renewal that comes through faith in Christ.

Amen